

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT  
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LEBANON/  
CIVIL CONFLICT

JENNINGS: Anyone who's been in Lebanon during the many years of fighting knows that the warring factions fight when they think it's productive and talk when they think they have something to gain; so now, the various leaders have decided to talk. Nonetheless, in Washington, as John McWethy reports, the Pentagon is taking some of the credit.

MCWETHY: U.S. intelligence sources indicate that use of the New Jersey's big 16-inch guns two days ago may have helped bring about a cease-fire in Lebanon. Though damage assessment is not yet complete, officials indicate that from a combination of intelligence sources, analysts believe that the 11 1,900-pound shells from the New Jersey not only laid waste to several anti-aircraft missile sites, but also made a vivid impression on the Syrian and Druse troops in the mountains. There are still many questions about why the New Jersey was not used sooner, especially if it can be so effective. For more than two months, the ships set off the coast of Lebanon, its guns silent. Gen. John Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, says that the battleship was not employed sooner because although it is a powerful weapon, it is also a limited one. He indicated that the big guns may not be as accurate as advertised by the Navy, but when used in the right situation they can have a tremendous psychological impact on an adversary; they must not, however, be overused. Vessey claims that he fought to move the battleship to the Mediterranean in the first place but is now trying to keep it in the waters off Lebanon, even with a cease-fire. But both he and others warn if the fighting continues, then the big guns will be heard from again. John McWethy, ABC News, the Pentagon.